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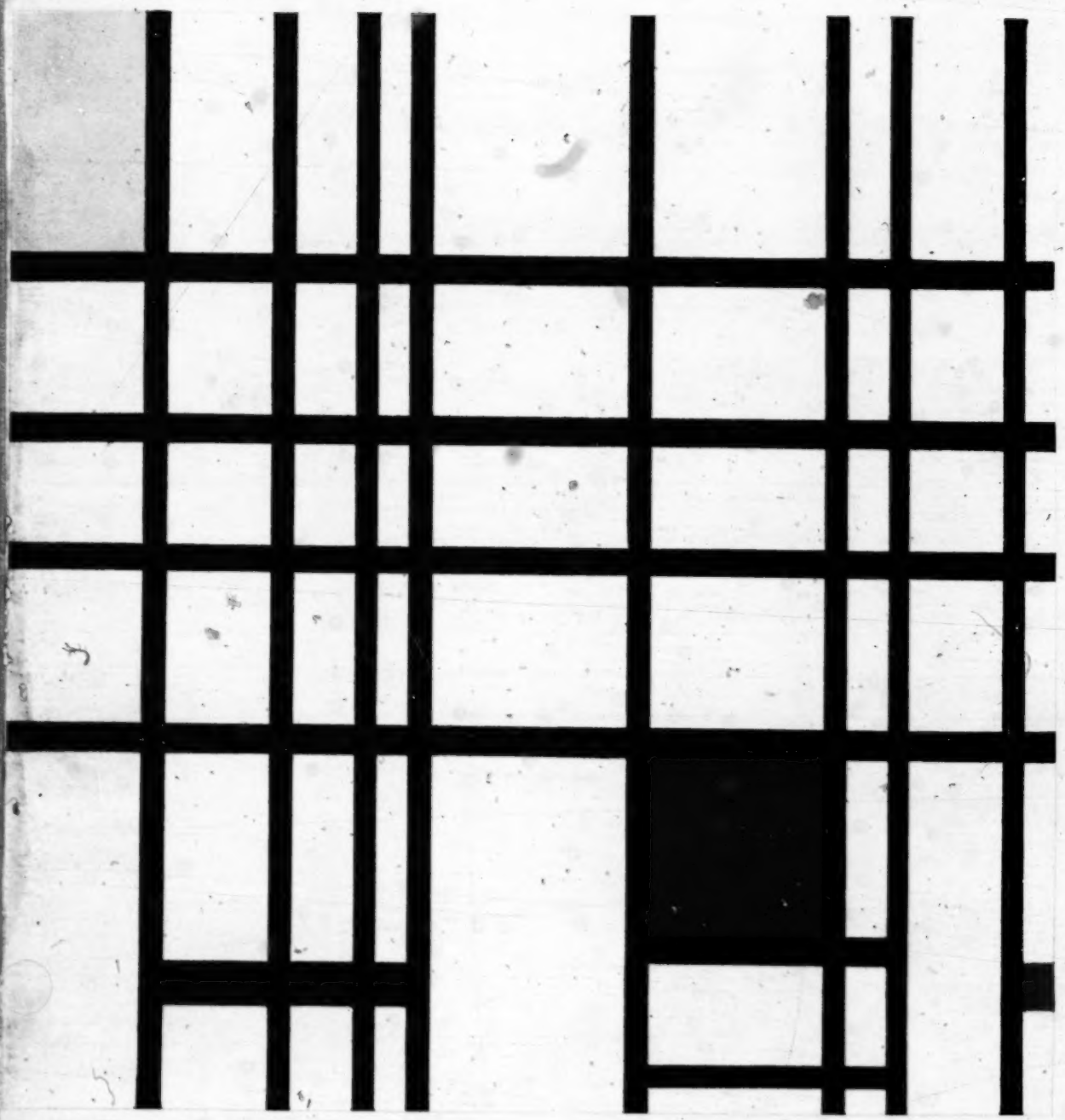


MONDRIAAN 1872-1944

WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY

COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

Presented by The Gallery

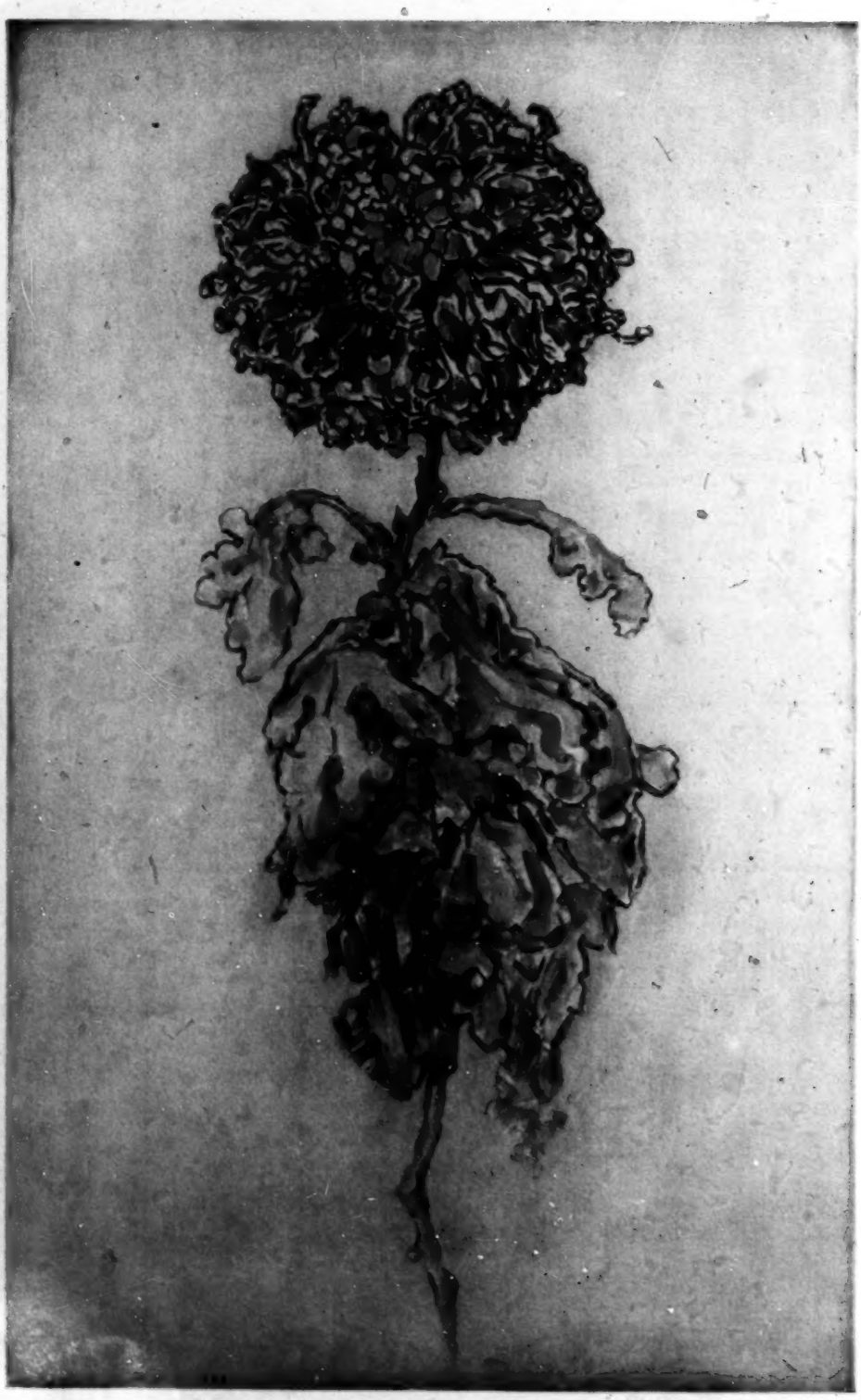
COVER REPRODUCTION
no. 54 COMPOSITION WITH RED,
YELLOW AND BLUE *1939-42*
oil on canvas 72X69 cm.
Collection: Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart

" Mention must be made of a special type of piano blues known as **Boogie-woogie,** *which was heard at Negro ' rent parties ' in Chicago in the early 1920's (Jimmy Yancey, ' Pine Top ' Smith) long before it became famous in the world at large (c. 1936) with Albert Ammons and Meade ' Lux ' Lewis (' Honky Tonk Train Blues '). This type of playing is characterized by an ostinato bass figure, usually sharply rhythmic, against which the right-hand rhapsodizes freely, the sections usually comprising 12 measures and the treatment often being contrapuntal (sometimes in only two widely-spaced parts), with repeated tones, broken-octave tremolos, and short figures reiterated in great rhythmic variety."*

Harvard Dictionary of Music, by Willi Apel. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1946 (page 378).

BOOGIE-WOOGIE

(From **boogie,** *slang, a Negro performer + rhyming imitative sound.) A primitive-sounding percussive style of playing blues on the piano, characterized by a persistent bass rhythm and florid figurations of a simple melody often in contrary motion to the bass.*



frontispiece cat. no. 9
CHRYSANTHEMUM *1906*
oil on canvas 67.5×42 cm.
Collection: Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart

PIET MONDRIAAN 1872 - 1944

Catalogue of a retrospective exhibition of paintings held at The Whitechapel Art Gallery, London: August to September 1955

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments page **2**
Preface page **3**
Biographical Note page **5**
Introduction by H. L. C. Jaffe page **8**
Mondriaan: Neo-Plasticism page **13**
Illustrated catalogue page **25**
Mondriaan: Pure Plastic Art page **46**
Bibliography page **49**
Articles by Mondriaan page **59**

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WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY
High Street, London, E.1.
Chairman of Trustees: The Viscount Bearsted
Director: Bryan Robertson

56.P54

COURTAULD INSTITUTE

PREFACE

The English have never really taken to abstract painting mostly because the public has scarcely ever had the chance to see it at its best. We have also lacked commentators who might have explained its point with simplicity and good humour. The English have also lacked the opportunity to see abstract art in its right setting—modern architecture—and have nearly always encountered it in the clinical and disconnected atmosphere of a public gallery. This is a pity, because the best abstract art of our time is also, quite clearly, the best art of the twentieth century. It has made the style of our time and, far from being a phase, has developed and enriched itself since the heroic period of Cubism between1907 and 1914.

Two further reasons for the vague English antipathy to abstract art might be confusion as to how it first evolved, and the fact that the best abstract art has been expressed in the most uncompromisingly professional manner—for the English on the whole prefer the amateur and his endearing occasional muddle, to the professional with his immaculate technique and carefully formulated ideas. The professional, to us, smacks of heartlessness and coldness ; the amateur, on the other hand, does it all for love and is easier to understand.

To increase our unease, abstract art not only relates very precisely to the present and on occasion transcends time itself, but it is also conceived in a spirit of intense optimism and confidence in the future. The best abstract pictures and sculptures are intended for well-designed modern interiors or new buildings. This pre-supposes that new buildings will continue to be built and civilisation will endure. The English are certainly not defeatist, but we do love the past and frequently have difficulty in relating ourselves to the present. We like our art to be nostalgic and interpretative rather than contemporary and formative. On the whole, we still find it strange that the art of our own period should relate to that period rather than express itself as a diluted evocation of an earlier and more familiar art style.

These observations apply equally to the French, the Dutch, the Italians or the Germans. The English are not more backward than their European neighbours. It is simply that the encounter between the public at large and the art of their own time is still quite a new experience, and understanding cannot be hurried.

The mental climate for abstract art, however, is kinder now than it was because of the lengthy process of popularisation which has brought so many of the discoveries of abstract art home to us all—in the form of fabrics, furniture, interiors, architecture, shop window display, advertising and so on. This process, today a fait accompli, *is an amusing answer to the Marxists—or the less enlightened Academicians—who would have us believe that abstract art is sterile and remote from life, and seek to confine art to the level of propaganda or illustration.*

Piet Mondriaan was one of the most powerful innovators in the vast modern movement. He was also a very great artist and his work stands before us as a testament of faith and as a challenge. His pictures are instinct with love and truth. He was a brilliant painter and he had an unerringly clear gaze on the twentieth century. Believing as he did that art and life should be indivisible, he gradually developed a unique style which he hoped could be used with the new architecture. His later work may in some ways be approached as designs or blue prints for large mural decorations, although their beauty and vitality as paintings are self-evident.

Mondriaan believed that art should be on our walls rather than in a small canvas hung on the wall. He did not believe in placing art on a pedestal as a quasi-religious object of veneration, but believed instead that art could be—as it once was—an integral part of life. He had an invincible belief in mankind, though he had little encouragement in his lifetime. He always believed that the twentieth century could be the greatest period of civilisation.

In spite of a second world war, much economic retrogression, and the inherently revolutionary nature of Mondriaan's ideas, his vision is making its mark upon our lives. Artists, architects and designers everywhere have paid him homage. Ten years after his death in New York, the radiance and assurance of his paintings seem stronger and more charged with meaning for our time than ever before, and Mondriaan's position as a great prototype figure in the history of art has assumed a new significance.

The Trustees of the Whitechapel Art Gallery hope that this exhibition will give pleasure to the English public and help to clarify and further the general appreciation of abstract art. The catalogue contains two of Mondriaan's own commentaries on XXth century painting as well as a short essay by H. L. C. Jaffé, of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Our thanks are due to Mr. Jaffé for this appraisal of Mondriaan, as well as to Mr. T. W. Earp for undertaking the task of translating Mondriaan's best-known statement of principles, originally published in French in 1920 and dedicated "aux hommes futurs".

The present exhibition should give students and visitors in general a fair idea of Mondriaan's heroically logical development as an artist; but the Trustees feel bound to point out that ideally the exhibition should be very much larger and that certain phases in Mondriaan's career which touched upon Symbolism, Cubism and Expressionism are not fully represented, mostly because of the difficulties inherent in borrowing pictures from abroad.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

1872 *Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan was born in Amersfoort on March 7th. He was the eldest of five children. His father was a headmaster and was fond of drawing.*

1880 *The family moved to Winterswijk. He began to draw and paint at an early age. He obtained instructions and lessons from his father, from his uncle: the painter Frits Mondriaan, and from the Doetichemse painter Jan Braet von Ueberfeld.*
Obtained elementary and intermediate drawing diplomas by private study.

1892–1897 *For three years attended the painting classes held by the Rijks academie in Amsterdam under August Allebe and then attended the evening course for another two years.*

1897–1904 *Worked in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam, at Amstel, Gein (often together with Simon Maris) and Vecht, among other places, and also on a few occasions in Brabant for a short time.*
In order to earn his livelihood, he made copies in museums: portraits and scientific drawings for Professor van Calcar in Leiden (1905–1906).
Painted landscapes particularly in the style of the Hague and Amsterdam impressionists. Admired Breitner.

1904–1905 *Lived in Brabant, at Uden. During this period he began for the first time consciously to seek his own less subjectively impressionistic style.*

1905–1908 *Returned to Amsterdam. First had his studio in the St. Lucas garret in the Rembrandtplein and later lived at 272 Albert Cupstraat. Was a member of St. Lucas and exhibited with this Association until 1910. For those giving him commissions he painted occasionally in the older style. In these years his work sometimes had a symbolic thread.*

1907 *Worked the entire summer at Oele near Hengelo in Overijssel with the painter Hulshoff Poll. In 1908 he probably stayed for a short time in Domburg. Knew and admired Jan Toorop and became friendly with Jan Sluyters. At the beginning of 1909 a big exhibition together with Corn. Spoor and Jan Sluyters in the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum. Here he exhibited Fauvistic work for the first time.*

1909–1910 *Stayed in Domburg, where Toorop also came regularly. Gave lessons to Jacoba van Heemskerck. This stay became extremely important for his development.*

1910–1911 *Returned to Amsterdam. Lived at 42 Sarphatipark. Sought to tauten his form, went over to cubism. Was a joint founder of the Moderne Kunstkring (" Modern Art Circle ").*

1911 *On December 20th he went to Paris on the advice of Conrad Kikkert. Settled at 26 Rue du Départ, where Kikkert and Lod. Schelfhour also lived. He admired the cubist work of Picasso and Léger and rapidly developed further in that direction.*

1911–1916 *Via cubism he progressively diverged farther away from representation in the direction of abstraction without specific subject (series: trees and facades).*

1913 *Represented at the " Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon " in Berlin and at the " Salon des Independants " in Paris.*

1914 *Returned to Holland for a short visit but was compelled to stay four years owing to the outbreak of the first world war. Stayed for a short time in Domburg and for the rest of these years lived at Laren.*

1915 *Made the acquaintance of Theo van Doesburg.*

1916 *Made the acquaintance of Bart van der Leck, whose experiments with flat colour were of importance for his further development.*

1917–1920 *Transition to neo-plasticism.*

1917 *With van Doesburg and some others he was the founder of the journal " De Stijl " (" Style ") and published a series of articles therein.*

1919 *Returned to Paris, lived first of all at 5 Rue du Coulmier, and then settled again at his old address of 26 Rue du Départ and, in the late thirties, at 278 Boulevard Raspail.*

1920 *Leonce Rosenberg attended to the publication of his writings " Le Neo-Plasticisme ", in which he set out his ideas regarding the " Nieuwe Beelding " (" Neo Plasticism "). From 1920 onwards, he permitted only horizontal and vertical lines and primary colours in his work.*

1922 *A review exhibition was organised in the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum by the Hollandse Kunstenaarskring (" Dutch Circle of Artists ") on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday.*

A difference of opinion regarding Neo-plasticism caused him to break with van Doesburg. From then on he no longer worked on "De Stijl". The Weimar Bauhaus published "Neue Gestaltung", a translation of his "Le Neo-Plasticisme". **1925**

The threat of a second world war made him decide to leave Paris. He settled in London at 60 Parkhill Road. Here he made contact with the English group of artists known as "Circle," which included Nicholson, Hepworth, Martin and Gabo. **1938**

Was compelled to leave London through the bombing and went to New York. **1940**

Found a favourable climate for his work in New York and received a great deal of support from his friends and admirers, Harry Holtzmann, Fritz Glarner and James Johnson Sweeney. **1940–1944**

Died on February 1 in the Murray Hill Hospital from pneumonia. **1944**

After his death commemorative exhibitions of his work were held in New York (1945), Amsterdam (1946), and Basle (1947); The Hague (1955) and Zürich (1955).

In 1945 his articles in English were published in New York under the title "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art".

INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years ago, Piet Mondriaan was forced to leave London during the ordeal of the Nazi bombs, and went to New York where he died four years later. The present exhibition of his work shows the genius and the universal importance of a man whom London once offered shelter and the friendship of some of its citizens. During the last years of his life, Mondriaan culminated a lifetime's search for pure plastic expression in the series of paintings of his American period—and the fifteen years since his journey from London to New York has brought universal acknowledgement of his genius. Today, the work of this great artist stands before us as a complete and conclusive entity, and no one can ignore the consistency of Mondriaan's development. The sequence of the works and the point ultimately attained are entirely convincing.

Mondriaan was born in 1872 in Amersfoort and started his career (or rather his vocation) as a painter at a very early age: his father, a school teacher, and his uncle, a painter, taught him the principles of drawing. At the age of twenty, he studied at the State Academy for Fine Arts at Amsterdam, where August Allebe, the head of the realist school, was then director. The first years show us the work of a talented but yet by no means original pupil of the school, which at that time had a marked influence on Dutch painting. Mondriaan's admiration for Breitner, the leader of Dutch impressionism, was symptomatic of his views at that time.

But towards 1904, at the age of thirty-two, his search for a more universal—a less subjective —expression revealed itself in his paintings. By adopting a more consistently impressionistic technique, by a simplification of his subject-matter, he tried to subdue the subjective approach of his temperament. This tendency became more and more visible in the following years, most typically so in various paintings of simple subjects (i.e. the farmhouse at Duivendrecht, of which he executed different consecutive versions: each version being another step towards what he described some years later as an " exclusion of the arbitrary ". These works make it clear that Mondriaan—as early as 1905—considered the individual approach of the artist, his personal moods and feelings, as detrimental to the universal possibilities of art.

After 1907 and 1908, when Mondriaan worked for some time in the eastern provinces of the country and at Domburg in the island of Walcheren, he tried to realise this tendency to describe a more universal expression by means of a fauvist technique and by a reduction of his colour scale to the units of primary colour. Mondriaan's acquaintance with Jan Toorop and with Jan Sluyters had considerable bearing on this new and very bold treatment, but the manner in which he adopted the new technique was a step further on his road towards a universal expression —towards a plastic translation of universal harmony, unhampered by the casual moods and reflections of the individual artist. Here, once again, various consecutive versions of a theme mark the progress of his evolution: the various paintings of the tower of Westkapelle and the canvases inspired by the dunes near Domburg show an ever-increasing simplification of conception—a simplification which ultimately had to end in abstraction.

There was a decisive moment for Mondriaan at the end of 1911 when, on the advice of a Dutch painter, he left Amsterdam for Paris. There he came into close contact with the cubist painters. He admired Picasso and Léger, and he soon evolved a cubist technique, though his interpretation was a very characteristic one. His colour scheme almost coincided with that of the cubists: a subdued brown, yellow and pink are his main colours, and he also adopted the centripetal composition of the cubist painters, which lead to a composition within an oval plane. The brilliance of strong colour was abandoned in favour of a calmer, more united gamut of tones. The most convincing examples of Mondriaan's progress towards cubism in this exhibition are probably the two versions of the still-life with the ginger jar; and it is by no means accidental that the subsequent treatment of the same subject reveals—as in the earlier stages of his evolution—the direction of Mondriaan's development. There is another, similar, example illustrating the same trend: whilst striving for cubism he once more took up the theme of the tree, which he had already treated in his fauvist period, and he succeeded in transforming the same source of inspiration into a cubist composition.

During the years in Paris, his cubist manner of composition became more and more consistent: he led cubism to a point which none of the Parisian initiators of the movement then envisaged. Slowly, but inexorably, the curved lines disappeared from his paintings and the whole of his large, oval-shaped compositions were constructed by means of horizontal and vertical lines, which, by their contrast and opposition, created a balance containing Mondriaan's message of universal harmony. Universal harmony was indeed what he sought in his subject matter, and he found his inspiration in the austere grandeur of the front of an old cathedral and the monumental peace of a solitary tree. Later, when he returned to his native Holland and was compelled by the outbreak of the first world war to remain there for four years, he translated the infinite peace and harmony of the ocean into a composition, built up entirely from horizontal and vertical black lines against a white background. This great work, in which he entirely succeeded in creating a sensation of boundless harmony, may be considered as the culminating point of his cubist period.

After Mondriaan's return to Holland, he found a home at Laren, a village near Amsterdam, at that time a centre of artistic life. Here, he made new acquaintances, which were to be of great importance to him in the future. One of his earliest friends at Laren was Mr. S. B. Slijper, who from the first moment of their acquaintance became his firm friend and admirer. At Laren, Mondriaan also made the acquaintance of Theo van Doesburg, a painter and art critic, who was one of the prominent figures of the Dutch *avant-garde*. Also, in 1916 at Laren he came into contact with the painter Bart van der Leck, who had by that time arrived at a stage of pictorial simplification that was of great interest to Mondriaan. Van der Leck had also reduced his colour scheme to primary colours, together with black and white, and he had stylised his forms to very suggestive and abbreviated outlines.

The result of the contact between Mondriaan, van Doesburg and van der Leck was the

founding of " *de Stijl* " a review of the arts which soon attracted to its nucleus the most progressive people in the Netherlands. But this review was by no means the only or the most important result of this contact: like a chemical process the new form of abstract art—which was to become neo-plasticism—was brought into existence. From that time on, Mondriaan abandoned cubist composition; he excluded all subject matter and evolved a new type of painting, brilliantly commented upon by him in " *de Stijl* ". After a few intermediate stages, his paintings were built up exclusively of horizontal and vertical lines, intersecting at right angles and executed in the three primary colours, blue, yellow and red. Thus he realised his ever-recurrent ambition: to express through the contrast of horizontal and vertical lines, the universal harmony which he sensed in every manifestation of nature.

In 1917, with the founding of " *de Stijl* " and helped by a curious interplay between the work and ideas of its three leading painters, Mondriaan found the beginnings of his ultimate style. From then on, his evolution was a steady progress, a deepening and refining of this new mode of expression. In 1920, when he had achieved full mastery of his powers, he published the theoretical exegesis of his work as a small pamphlet, entitled " *Le Neoplasticisme* ".

In this short study, he explains not only his new way of painting, and how he arrived at it, but all the ethical and spiritual implications of his new artistic creed. From 1920 onwards, dignified and serene paintings were produced with increasing assurance. These clean, balanced and radiant canvases adorned the walls on which they were hung with their brightness and their serene harmony. The paintings were no longer—as in his cubist period—centred around a point of gravitation—they seemed to expand beyond their frames and to create a balance and a harmony that filled the entire room. Through the subsequent years, they gained in clarity and splendour. Towards 1930 they acquired a sober grandeur: a few of the paintings of this period are built up exclusively from black or yellow bands of colour.

During all these years, only a few outside events interrupted the steady searching and growing. In 1925 he ended his connections with " *de Stijl* " on account of an artistic difference of opinion with van Doesburg. In 1938, he left Paris at the threat of approaching war, and found refuge in London. There he painted some of his most restrained and austere works. In 1940, he left London, where the blitz was threatening his life and work, for the hospitality of some friends in New York. There, at the age of sixty-eight, a new vitality inspired by the impressions made by a new world and a new rhythm, appeared in his work. His large paintings of the New York period express a new rhythmic life and a more vivid harmony through contrasting and intersecting brightly coloured lines. His last, gloriously vivid, painting: " Victory Boogie Woogie ", where the coloured bands are dissolved into rhythmically alternating rectangles of primary colour, was left unfinished. On February 1st, 1944, Mondriaan died in New York. Since then, admiration for his work has continued to grow. More and more people have realised the depth and extent of his renewal of modern art. In our confused and turbulent times, Mondriaan rediscovered and re-valued the eternal elements of painting.

Although he lived for thirty years in Paris and died in the United States and though he had always aspired to a universal art and succeeded in realising it, Mondriaan was essentially a Dutchman. He was certainly inspired and guided by French cubism: the works between 1911 and 1917 show this influence. But the mere fact that he thought of these works as being " too naturalistic ", points to a train of thought which is essentially Dutch. Mondriaan's love for consistent, unflinching, abstract speculation has always been inherent in Dutch Calvinism. Mondriaan's grudge against naturalism was mainly directed against the casualness, the arbitrariness of outward appearance, which always hides or distorts the essence of things. Against this same outward appearance, the zeal of the Dutch Calvinist iconoclasts was directed as early as 1566: for them, the purity of the Gospels was only hidden and distorted by statues, sacred images and the representation of sacred events. Their eyes were fixed on godliness and its representation was profane. In the same spiritual climate, another work saw the light in the 17th century—a work that in my opinion is closely related to Mondriaan's painting: Spinoza's " *Ethica* ".

Spinoza's great work bears the title: "*Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*". The same title would fit Mondriaan's *oeuvre*, the more so as his aesthetic seeking and striving was always founded on an ethical basis. In 1943, Mondriaan wrote:

" If we conceive of truly human life as continuous enjoyment in discovering and creating concrete equilibrium, then this equilibrium becomes essential for us. All abstract expressions of life, like science, philosophy, and all abstract creations like art, may be regarded as so many means to attain equilibrium—' art ' is only a ' substitute ' as long as the beauty of life is deficient.

" Through my plastic experiences, I became cognizant of the truth that the abolition of all particular form is the only way to accomplish this.

" In Nature ", he wrote, " a complete deliverance from tragic feeling is not possible."

For Mondriaan, only geometry, the realm of lines and planes, was not charged with tragedy or burdened with casual, personal fate. Three hundred years ago, another Dutchman, Spinoza, felt the same. He tried to instil the same universal validity into his work that Mondriaan created in our time.

Mondriaan's work is closely linked with Holland's spiritual past. But it belongs to the present as well, and above all to present-day Holland. Modern life cannot be fully comprehended without an excessive amount of abstract thought. Every machine, all apparatus serving modern life, presupposes abstract thought. Why should modern art not share this abstract characteristic of modern life ? Should art always be based on the individual feelings and moods of the artist ?

Abstract thought makes itself felt in the presupposition of modern life more in Holland than in any other European country. The water level, the condition of the building ground, and many other facets of life are not created by nature, but by man: they are ordered and regulated by human thought. Without human thought, without mathematical discipline, the entire country would have been submerged long ago. Nature—as it is known elsewhere in

Europe—is relatively scarce in the Netherlands. The country is built by man, and not much is left to chance. That is why the straight line and the right angle dominates in the Dutch landscape.

It is not by accident that an aerial view of a Dutch polder landscape bears a strange resemblance to the paintings of Mondriaan. By this I do not mean that the Dutch landscape has inspired Mondriaan's paintings—such a naturalism was far from his remotest thoughts. But he has built up his canvases according to the same well-defined and eternally valid laws, by which generations before him were guided whilst *constructing* the Dutch landscape. And in no other country is there so much evidence of the balance of vertical and horizontal lines as in the Netherlands, where the horizon is not a theoretical line, but a visible fact.

It is Mondriaan's great achievement that he made these elementary discoveries to serve universal art. As a Dutchman, he perhaps recognised the value of abstract thought earlier and more concisely than other modern artists. He worked with the elements he had rediscovered; he studied and analysed them; and in doing so, he found a new, universal language: the language of lines, of planes, and of pure, unbroken colour. He discovered, that he could, by balancing these elements, express a contrasting tranquil balance of movements. Throughout his life he longed for this equilibrium, and he realised it in his paintings in order that humanity might realise it in life.

H. L. C. JAFFE
Acting Director of Municipal Museums: Amsterdam

MONDRIAAN : NEO - PLASTICISM

general principle of plastic equivalence Paris 1920

Although art may, from one aspect, be the expression in plastic terms of our æsthetic emotion, we cannot thence determine that art is no more than " the æsthetic expression of our subjective sensations ". Logic demands that art should be the plastic expression of our whole being, that it should equally include the emergence of what within us is not individual—of what completely opposes and annuls our individuality—as that, on the other hand, it must be the direct expression of the universal within us, which is exactly the same in appearance as the universal without. Thus understood, the universal is what exists and always remains, operating within us in varying degree, unconscious, opposed to the more or less conscious, to the individuality which repeats and renews itself.

All our being partakes alike of the one as the other : of the unconscious as the conscious, the immutable as the mutable, coming to birth and changing their form under their reciprocal action. This action contains all the misery and all the happiness of life ; the misery is caused by continual separation, the happiness by the perpetual renaissance of what changes. That which is immutable is above all misery and all happiness : it is balance. By the immutable within us we are identified with all existence ; the mutable destroys our balance, limits us and separates us from all that is other than ourselves. It is from the balance with the unconscious and the immutable that art comes. Through the conscious it attains plastic expression. Thus the creation of art is the plastic expression of both the unconscious and the conscious. It demonstrates their relations. It changes, but art remains immutable.

Perhaps, in " the totality of our being ", the individual or the universal is dominant, or a balance between the two is approached. It is this latter possibility which allows us, as individuals, to become universal ; that is to say, consciously to project the unconscious. It is then that we see and hear universally, for we are raised above the domination of what is more exterior. Seeing the form of the exterior appearance, hearing sounds and words, these seem other than when conveyed by our universal vision and audition. What we really see or hear is the direct manifestation of the universal, while what we perceive outside us as form or sound seems weakened and veiled. If we seek expression in plastic terms, we express our universal perception and, through that, our universal being as individuals : hence the one and the other are in equivalence. To find oneself beyond the limitation of form, and nevertheless to employ form that limits and words that materialise, is not a true manifestation of our being ; it is not pure plastic expression. A new plastic expression is inevitable, something doubly equivalent must be evolved, hence a plastic expression of balanced relationship.

All arts strive to attain an æsthetic plasticity for conveying the relation between the

individual and the universal, the subjective and the objective, nature and spirit : thus all arts are, without exception, plastic. Despite this, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting are alone counted as plastic arts, because we live only in our individual consciousness. But in regard to the unconscious, musical or verbal expression is no less plastic than that of the other arts. Pure plastic expression manifests itself through the unconscious, while it is plastic expression in a limited form which the conscious individual creates and which represents him.

Up to the present, none of the arts has been purely plastic owing to the domination of the conscious individual : all were more or less descriptive, indirect, tentative. The individual, dominant within us and without, " describes ". The universal within us does so, too, but only when insufficiently conscious inside our individual consciousness to reach a pure appearance.

While the universal within us becomes more and more conscious, and the indeterminate grows towards the determinate, things outside us keep their indeterminate form. Hence the need, according as the unconscious (the universal within us) approaches the conscious, for constant transformation and a better demarcation of the capricious and indeterminate appearance of natural phenomena.

Thus the new spirit abolishes limited form in æsthetic expression and reconstructs an appearance equivalent to the subjective and the objective, the included and the inclusive—a balanced duality of the universal and the individual—and with this duality-in-plurality it creates the purely æsthetic relationship.

One has the impression that Literature and Music, by description and paraphrase, followed the so-called plastic arts. The inverse equally holds : these plastic arts seem to follow the romantic and symbolic spirit of Literature and Music. As long as natural form was employed as a plastic instrument, one could understand this tendency to description, above all in Sculpture and Painting. Natural form veils the direct plastic expression of the universal, because the subjective and the objective are not there in plastic equivalence. The plastic expressions of the one and the other are confused.

Natural plastic appearance presents itself as mass. (See De Stijl, yr. 1, art. 4, Dutch Organ of Neo-Plasticism.)

It is expressed, plastically, as a spherical form aspiring to be a plane, or else as a plane compelled to become spherical ; as a curve tending to be a straight line, or a straight line that is being forced into a curve.

This plastic expression is not, therefore, balanced.

It was an attempt to reach balance by composition, but a composition obscure in representation and subject. Thus it was on account of impure means being employed that Sculpture and Painting arrived at description.

Similarly, the plastic process of Verbal Art has also become impure (form), and consequently follows the same direction as the so-called plastic arts. There, also, was an effort to express

the contents of everything by paraphrase and not by the word itself. The word—assembled in a phrase—was weakened by its homogeneous combination. Expression was effected by the help of symbolism. Nevertheless there exist words—several words, indeed—which, by their own power and inter-relationship, can express the two principles of being.

In all the arts, the objective strove with the subjective, the universal with the individual, pure plastic expression with descriptive expression. Thus the tendency of art was towards a balanced plasticity. The disequilibrium between the individual and the universal creates tragedy and is expressed in tragic plasticity. In what exists, whether as form or mass, the natural is dominant ; this creates tragedy. (De Stijl, yr. 1 N.B., art. 8.)

The tragic element in life leads to artistic creation ; art, because it is abstract and opposed to the substantially natural, may precede the gradual disappearance of the tragic.

The more tragedy diminishes, the more art gains in purity.

The new spirit can only be made manifest in the bosom of tragedy. It finds but an outworn form ; the new plasticity is still to be created. Born in the ambiance of the past, it can only express itself in the vital reality of the abstract. (De Stijl, yr. 1 N.B., art. 9.)

Since its point of departure is everywhere, the new spirit cannot entirely liberate itself from tragedy. The new plasticity, the expression of the vital reality of the abstract, is not entirely liberated from tragedy, but has ceased to be dominated by it.

In the plasticity of the past, on the contrary, tragedy is dominant. Tragedy and tragic plasticity are indispensable.

As long as the individual is supreme, tragic plasticity is necessary, for that is what, in this case, creates emotion. But now that a period of greater maturity has been reached, tragic plasticity has become insupportable.

In the vital reality of the abstract, the new man has outgrown the sentiments of nostalgia, joy, rapture, sadness, horror, etc. ; in the emotion made constant by beauty, these are rendered pure or clarified. The new man obtains a much deeper vision of sensible reality.

Things are beautiful or ugly only in time and space. As the new man's vision is liberated from those two factors, all attains unity in the unique beauty.

Art has always desired this vision, but being plastic form and following natural appearance, it has been unable to obtain it in its purity, remaining tragic plasticity, with the contrary intention.

Verbal Art clearly indicates the same desire. Tragedy, comedy, epic, lyric, romanticism—these are only various expressions of tragic plasticity.

Gradually, and so long as it did not degenerate into impressionism properly so called—another form of tragic plasticity—the first opposition appeared with pure realism, because it came from a more objective vision.

In Painting, Neo-Impressionism, Pointillism and Divisionism attempted to abolish the

materialism which dominated plasticity by the suppression of modelling and the customary perspective view. But it is only in Cubism that we find this elevated to a system. In Cubism, tragic plasticity lost its dominating force mainly by the opposition of pure colour and the application of abstraction to natural form.

In the same way, in the other arts, Cubism, like Futurism and, later, Dadaism, purified and demolished the dominance of the tragic in plasticity.

But the Real Abstract Painting, or Neo-Plasticism, " liberated " itself by being a really new plasticity. At the same time, it raised itself above the appreciation and conception of the past, which demand tragic plasticity.

It is not in general recognised that disequilibrium is a curse to mankind ; the sentiment of tragedy is still eagerly cultivated. Up to the present, that which is most exterior is everywhere dominant. Life and society are ruled by the feminine and the material, which fetter the spiritual expression that functions in the masculine. In the manifesto of the Futurists, the proclamation of hatred of the woman (the feminine) is altogether just. It is the Woman within the Man that is the direct cause of the dominance of the tragic in art.

The conception of the past, which insisted on tragedy, reigns supreme over the masses. Thence came art as it now is—our theatres, cinemas and concerts, such as they are. Tragic plasticity is a negative force, whose conception, dating from the past, is a form of imprisonment. Its employment is accompanied by moralising, lecturing, teaching . . . Let us not forget that society desires utility side by side with beauty!

The past continually changes and grows towards the new. We have seen the new come to being : in all the arts it is growing in greater or lesser degree.

The past is harmful only in so far as it impedes the new. It is only in regard to the new that it is no longer of account. At some bygone time, all varieties of the past were " new " . . . but not the new of today.

For let us not forget that we are at a turning-point of culture, at the end of all the past : the cleavage between the two is absolute and definitive. Whether it be recognised or not, one may prophesy that the future will no longer comprehend tragic plasticity, just as an adult is ignorant of the soul of the child.

At the same time as the abolition of dominant tragedy, the new spirit suppresses description in art. Because the obstacle of form has been destroyed, the new art affirms itself as pure plasticity. The new spirit has found its plastic expression. In its maturity, the one and the other are neutralised and linked in unity. The confusion in the apparent unity of the interior and the exterior has become an equivalent duality which forms absolute unity. The individual and the univeral are in a more balanced opposition. Because it is confounded with the unity, description becomes superfluous : the one is known by the other. They obtain expression in plastic terms without the use of form ; their relationship alone (by direct plastic means) creates

plasticity.

It is in painting that the New Plasticity for the first time reached complete expression. Since it was possible to formulate it owing to its principle being firmly established, this plasticity ceaselessly perfects itself.

Neo-Plasticism has its roots in Cubism. It can equally assume the name of Real Abstract Painting, because the abstract (as with the mathematical sciences, but without reaching the absolute as they do) can be expressed in a plastic reality.

That is even the characteristic essence of the new Plasticity in Painting. It is a composition of rectangular planes in colour expressing the deepest reality. It is evolved from the plastic expression of relationships and not from natural appearance. It realises what all painting has desired to realise, but has been unable to express otherwise than in a veiled manner. The coloured planes, as much by position and dimension as by colour values, only plastically express relationships, and not forms.

The new Plasticity places these relationships in æsthetic equilibrium and by this gives expression to the new harmony.

The future of the new Plasticity and its realisation, properly so called, in Painting, resides in the Chromoplasticity in architecture. (De Stijl, yr. 3, Trialogue 7.) This rules equally the interior and the exterior of the edifice with all that, in the latter, plastically expresses relationships by colour. Not more than the New Plastic-Imitation-Picture, which prepared its way, is Chromoplasticity a " decoration ". It is an entirely new way of painting, into which all Painting resolves itself, pictorial and decorative alike. It unites the objective character of decorative art (which it possesses in much greater degree) with the subjective character of pictorial art (than which it is more profound). Actually, for material and technical reasons, it is very difficult to trace its exact image.

At present, each art compels itself to more direct expression by the plastic means at its command, and seeks to liberate itself as much as possible.

Music tends to the liberation of sound, Literature to that of the word. Thus, in purifying the plastic means employed, they arrive at the pure plasticity of relationships. The degree and method of purification vary according to the art and the period when they were practised.

The new spirit, in fact, is revealed by the plastic method ; it is expressed by composition. This must express a balanced plasticity functioning for the individual and the universal. The tragic dominant must be abolished by composition and the plastic means together ; for if the plastic appearance is not composed in constant and neutralising opposition, the plastic means would return to the expression of " form " and would be again veiled by description.

Thus, Neo-Plasticism in art is not solely a question of " process ". In the New Plasticity, and through it, the process changes. The touchstone of the new spirit, after composition, is precisely what is so often and so carelessly called " the process ".

" It is by the appearance that one judges whether a work of art is really plastic expression pure and universal." (De Stijl, yr. 1 N.B., page 65.

Because Sculpture and Painting have been able to reduce primitive plastic means to a universal plastic method, they can express themselves plastically and effectively in both the exact and the abstract. Architecture, by its very nature, already disposes of a plastic means liberated from capricious form and natural appearance.

In the New Plasticity, painting no longer expresses itself by the materialistic appearance which gives naturalist expression. It is, on the contrary, expressed plastically by the plan within the plane. In reducing to a plan the three-dimensional materialism in the painting, a pure relationship is expressed.

Yet Architecture, and Sculpture also, have, by their plastic means, the advantage of other possibilities over Painting.

By its plastic means, Architecture is an æsthetic and mathematical manner of appearance, therefore exact and more or less abstract. Being a composition of planes which oppose and neutralise each other, it is the exact plastic expression of balanced æsthetic relationship in space. The New Plasticity does not regard Architecture, any more than Painting, as morphoplastic. That is the vision of the past. In spite of the form apparent in architectural plasticity, it is not form defined and limited—no more so than the composition of rectangular coloured planes in the New Plasticity of Painting. Real form is that which is enclosed, or round, or curving, opposed to the apparent form of the rectangle where the lines intersect and join in tangents without ceasing to continue.

Viewed as balanced opposition of the expanding and the limited in the plane composition, architectural composition (despite its third dimension) ceases to exist in its materialism and as object. Its abstract expression appears even more direct than is the case with Painting.

Still, the abstract is not realised by stylisation ; it does not become apparent by simplification and purification alone. For the abstract remains plastic expression functioning for the universal; it is the most profound interiorisation of the exterior and the purest exteriorisation of the interior. (De Stijl, yr. 1, N.B., art. 3.)

Today, Architecture is to be seen purifying and simplifying itself, but far from realising the plastic expression of the abstract.

As the direct appearance of the universal, abstract plasticity neutralises the individual.

Actually, in forcing oneself to generalise, one only accentuates the " particularity " of the work of architecture. It is as with all form stylised or led back to its geometrical expression ; what is particular stands out all the more forcibly because what is capricious has been the more completely excised. Thus we remark at the present time the appearance of edifices in the severe style of temples, but that is not what is meant by the new.

The new spirit does away with the particular. It is not enough that form becomes its very essence and that the proportions are everywhere harmonious ; what is needed, on the contrary, is that the entire work should be none other than the plastic expression of relationships, with the disappearance of all particularity.

Building in mass is preferable to building in units. With the former, the particular is already suppressed by a composition which springs from itself. But in regarding closely, composition is equally the first condition in construction by units—in the same way that, with Painting, it is, above all, the composition which must suppress the individual. Yet, since the beginning of Architecture, that art was, by its own nature, an unconscious effort towards abstract plastic expression. Actually, with Architecture, it was not possible to distort the plastic means as radically as with Painting and Sculpture. It was only by calling these latter to its aid that mathematical stone here and there became natural appearance. Also, decadence was needed for all to take on the most capricious aspect of the natural.

Painting, on the other hand, had to rise from natural to abstract plasticity. Thus, for it, the road terminating in the exact plasticity of relationships was more difficult. From this one understands that where Architecture, by the facility of its plastic means, passed close to pure plastic expression without awareness, Painting arrived first at a clear conception that art is at its greatest purity in the plastic expression of æsthetic relationship alone.

Although Sculpture possessed in the prism an exact plastic means, it preferred, like Painting, a more or less natural plasticity. Sometimes it reached stylisation, and even spritualisation, of form ; but it always remained morphoplastic.

Gradually, natural appearance established itself so strongly that at last it was esteemed indispensable to these arts. Even Architecture shares this fate. In general, it is not recognised as " art " if it arrives at expressing the beautiful by the pure plasticity of relationships, and refuses to be inspired by nature or to borrow from Sculpture or Painting in order to clothe itself. From this one perceives how great a degree of impurity the æsthetic conception has reached ; there is a wish to recognise as " art " only a plastic expression clad in limited form. Thus the New Plasticity is sometimes designated in Painting by the word " decoration ", because, instead of denying the individual in plasticity, it has reduced it to coloured rectangular planes. If, on the one hand, the old conception continues to be an obstacle to renaissance, and the chief foe of the new spirit, many artists, on the other hand, fear the great difficulty of having at their disposal only so simple a plastic means.

However that may be, the new spirit must manifest itself in all the arts without exception. The fact that the arts differ from each other is no reason for one being of greater value than another. It may lead to a different kind of appearance, but not to an opposing appearance. Once an art is the plastic expression of the abstract, the others cannot at the same time continue to be the plastic expression of the natural. The two do not go together ; hence, until now,

there exists this mutual hostility. The New Plasticity abolishes this enmity ; it makes unity of all the arts.

Sculpture can no longer be the servant of Architecture, as was so often the case under the old conception. It is no more the plastic representation of ideas or objects ; it no more exists morphoplastically. By its quasi-abstract plastic means, it is possible that it may become æsthetic plastic expression through balanced opposition of expansion and limitation, and this without having to take into account utilitarian or constructional exigencies.

If the Sculpture and the Architecture of the past fix at a certain point space that is otherwise empty and indefinite, the new Sculpture (the new Architecture equally) accomplishes much more in reducing the caprice of nature by balanced composition and complete concentration on relationships.

Sculpture and Architecture, until now, have done away, by division, with space as a thing in itself. The new Sculpture and Architecture must do away with the work of art as an object or a thing.

Each art possesses a specific expression, a particular nature. " While the contents of all the arts are the same, the possibilities of plastic exteriorisation differ. These possibilities come to being for each art upon its particular terrain, and continue to be localised there. Each art possesses its own means of expression. It follows that each art must discover for itself the necessary transformations of its plastic means—means which will remain limited by their own frontiers. It is also for this reason that the technical possibilities of one art must not be judged by those of another. They must be judged in themselves and in relation to the art in question." (De Stijl, yr. 1, page 3.)

" However that may be, in a period of advanced intelligence and in spite of differences between plastic means, all art, whatever it be, makes an effort towards plastic expression functioning by balanced relationships, for it is the balance of relationships which most purely expresses the harmony and unity that are proper to the mind." (De Stijl, yr. 1, page 4.)

If the arts called plastic find expression in material more or less gross, Music and Verbal Art (in so far as they are " sound ") make use only of a much more tenuous material.

It is a capital difference which makes the arts entirely dissimilar.

If confused noise be transformed into measured sound, the properties of confused noise would retain their values. Does confused noise clothe itself in limited form? If colour takes form, it can be neutralised by the opposition of colour or by the straight line ; is the same reduction possible for sound?

Verbal Art is the plasticity of sound and idea. Even the word as figure contains sound, although we do not hear it. In the actual word, the purely abstract appearance is veiled, disturbed by its materialisation, by traditional plastic exteriorisation and the degradation of the idea. Verbal Art cannot, therefore, be the immediate plastic expression of the universal

through the plastic means of which it disposes at present. And yet . . . evidence indicates that, in the end, abstract beauty will be equally manifest in this art. As it is with Music, Verbal Art, in order to acquire a really new plasticity, must traverse a much longer distance than the so-called plastic arts. It follows that, the easier it is to purify the plastic means of an art, the more swiftly that art will arrive at the New Plasticity. The various arts do not simultaneously reach equal profundity, for, being different appearances of the universal, they do not ripen together.

Verbal Plasticity will liberate itself from form—that is, from the limiting dominator—much more slowly than Painting.

The word, indeed, considerably more than the natural appearance of the thing it expresses, evokes in us the individual ; the word has become our representation of sensible reality. It is equally (as an element of language) a utility. As the individual everywhere dominates in the world, language finds its firmest base in the individual. Therefore, attachment to the individual will obscure the word's pure expression. And even if the new spirit, as it grows, is able to free itself from this bondage, the word will keep its individual plastic expression.

Nevertheless the word as an element of language remains necessary in order to give things a name. The separation between the word considered as language and the word considered as art would probably place the latter too far removed from life.

For this reason, where the plastic arts arrive at the direct annulling of form, Verbal Art must abolish it indirectly . . . at any rate, in the immediate future. The idea of the word will be transformed in its significance within our consciousness by an opposing plasticity, for that alone can rescue the word from limitation. Then the new idea, by natural transition, will arrive at suppressing form. In a very distant future, the word must be created again, without form ; that is to say, it would become a " sound " of a new character and unaccompanied by limitation either as sound or idea. Equally, the word could be represented by figure alone. Sounds, signs or figures must be created anew as sound-plasticity, which would be the pure plastic exteriorisation of the universal, therefore of the individual in its most profound degree. Then alone will Verbal Art obtain a pure plastic means, allowing it to express, by composition, relationships functioning in balance.

For the time being, we shall have to limit ourselves to the indirect suppression of form as it stands at present individualised by the word. And to do that, we must oppose it to what it is not, while yet making it a part of it—to its contrary one becomes two—" the one " and " the other ". The one knows and sees itself by the other. (De Stijl, yr. 1, N.B., art. 6.) Thus the limitation of the word is suppressed, its contents enlarged ; we can express it plastically in its totality. So, in showing the action of things completely and with clarity, approximate description and the tragic dominant disappear by plastic balance. From the moment when things are shown in their complete clarity, they are suppressed in so far as ideas ; there remains only the plasticity of relationships. Verbal Art thus becomes plastic expression in balanced

relationships . . . despite what limitation the plastic means may exercise.

In Painting, the New Plasticity employs exteriorising colour, although plastic expression by duality of position and the straight line is more pure. In Verbal Art equally, the plasticity (at least for the present) will still remain near to the exterior. To arrive at the definite, Verbal Art must provisionally avail itself with the means already to hand. It will have to express itself plastically by the multiplicity of varied relationship. As with Painting, the New Plasticity has its dimensional relationship at command ; in Verbal Art it disposes not only of this, but also of its contents, as relationship of opposition. By its multiple aspects and different relationships, the single and same thing may be better known ; several words together will express themselves with more definite plasticity. The new art of the word will decide for itself to what extent the opposition of contraries can be useful to it. The essential is, that the principles of contrariety dominate the entire work as much in its composition as in the balanced relationship of its plastic means. Every artist must seek his own best way of attaining this. He will use and improve the perfections furnished by Syntax, Typography, etc., already discovered by the Futurists, Cubists and Dadaists. He will equally avail himself of all that comes to him from life, science and beauty. But, above all, he will be directed by pure plastic perception. (De Stijl, yr. 2, Trialogue, scene 3.)

In classic and romantic literature, one equally finds the expression of the action of contraries, but without verbal plasticity and veiled by description. Dr. H. Schoenmaekers has attempted to show that in " Candida " Bernard Shaw opposes psychological contraries. Similarly, one often finds in the literature of ancient India two things which apparently cancel each other out. Thus, contraries do not yet manifest themselves in art as plastic verbal expression (morpho-plasticity). By concentrating on the " exterior " we have now arrived at plastic expressed through analogies, by placing them simply one beside another. Since then, with a change in the object and its activity, has come an enlargement of expression, but this plastic transformation does not yet possess completely balanced plasticity. Nevertheless, the old conception of composition is demolished, and the new conception can now make its appearance. Through the ripening " exterior-individual ", things are coming to being in their totality, and thanks to that, the universal is arriving at direct plastic expression.

As it is more abstract than natural appearance, the word represents the contents and appearance of all that exists. It causes a whole world of beauty to be contained in a few signs or sounds. The New Art wishes to express this exactly determinate world by plasticity. Actually, all is vague in the singular word. This vagueness is slightly dissipated by composition and proportion, but yet remains veiled by form. The word, as form, is a limitation, and this limitation comes partly from ourselves. Each sees a ball in his own manner, but a ball remains a ball for each. We see, then, what is contained within things in relation to what we ourselves contain ; we penetrate more or less to the universal, and so shed a little of our particular vision. A ball is a world in itself, and a world outside itself ; our personality only perceives a part of it. It

perceives only the part which touches its consciousness, so far as it brings a result in our exterior life. Thus the ball becomes the representation of our subjective thought functioning in regard to it.

Art goes beyond particular thought as the unconscious (the universal) goes beyond individual consciousness. If, at the moment of æsthetic creation, the universal (the unconscious) pierces the conscious, when the entire vision of things is at last attained, the particular no longer counts. It is for this reason that the vocation of art lies in the plastic suppression of particular thought.

The Futurists wished to free the word from the idea. D. Braga said, " Art will henceforth dispense with the idea. It is the idea which acts as wagoner for the past. It fixes perceptions, and gives them a logical form which permits their survival in the brain. Marinetti hates intelligence." But, if our consciousness attributes to the word a content and a significance, the latter must necessarily reach us in passing through our intelligence. Is it possible that intelligence counts for nothing in the case of modern man, if he experiences æsthetic emotion? The new man joins feeling and intelligence in unity. When he thinks, he feels ; when he feels, he thinks. The one and the other, in spite of him, live automatically within him. (De Stijl, yr. 1, N.B., art. 5.) The emotion of beauty vibrates constantly through his whole being ; thus with all his being he attains abstract plastic expression.

In the mentality of the past, sometimes intelligence, sometimes feeling, was active ; turn by turn, the one dominated the other. This mentality separated them and set them at enmity. If the Futurists hate intelligence, it must be because they still think of the matter according to the old mentality. Through the new spirit, feeling and intelligence change their nature ; particular thought ceases to exist. For particular thought is not the same as creative and concentrated thought, which gives a sentiment of composure. The first produces descriptive and morphological art ; the second, purely plastic appearance.

The New Plasticity agrees with Futurism in desiring the elimination of the " self " in art. It goes even farther than they. For one sees by the art of the Futurists that they are ignorant of the consequences of the New Plasticity. They wished to replace " the psychology of man ", henceforth exhausted, by " the lyrical obsession of matter ".

Futurism appeals, above all, to the sensation. It is the frenzy of the ambiance, or, according to a formula borrowed from Marinetti himself, a lyrical psychology of matter. (D. Braga.)

Thus " their " lyricism remains descriptive, and in painting, the Futurists even fell into symbolism. In spite of their penetration of matter, they did not reach the plastic expression of all matter (matter and energy ; they did not attain the expression of either in a balanced relationship.

By active concentration, " thinking-in-beauty " or " feeling-in-beauty " may, then, dominate a work of art, or they may be joined in a single manner of being. The first method produces prose, the second poetry, and the third the new Verbal Art.

Thought which tends to truth alone remains in the domain of pure reason and is not an art. Creative thought is always plastic. Philosophy, as well as Art, expresses the universal plastically ; the first expresses itself in truth, the second in beauty. Since, at base, truth and beauty are but one, it is not logical to deny the evident kinship of these two plasticities. Art is only the plastic expression of man in his totality ; nothing must be lacking to it.

Some advanced spirits entirely reject logic—is that liberating art? Is not art the exteriorisation of logic?

One does not succeed in liberating the word from thought by arranging words beside each other without any link at all between them, as the Dadaists wished to do—" Each islet-vocable must present abrupt contours on the page. It will be situated here (or there will do as well) like a pure tone, and not far away other pure tones will vibrate, but with an absence of relationships such as authorises no association of thoughts. It is thus that the word will be delivered from all its previous significance, finally, and from the evocation of the past." (André Gide, speaking of the Dada movement.)

In the same way as with the plasticity of the other arts, we are aware in the Music of earlier times the confusion of the active and the passive, although here and there construction is more evident, an opposition is more pronounced (for example, in Bach's fugues). But for the most part, constructive plasticity is veiled by descriptive melody. Most often, the rhythm, as in pictorial or sculptural plasticity, was capricious. This was admissible in a period when individual sentiment was dominant ; this found its right expression. Today it is not admissible. The new spirit demands, in Music as elsewhere, an equivalent plasticity of the individual and the universal functioning in balanced proportion. To reach this, it is necessary to reduce the individual and put forward the universal, in order to obtain an equivalent duality, opposing and neutralising. This duality must exteriorise itself plastically in sound, as the New Plasticity in the so-called plastic arts exteriorises itself by a duality of normal opposition (in the mathematical sense)—the active and the passive, the interior and the exterior, the masculine and the feminine, spirit and matter (which are only one in the universal.) But how, in the sound which remains confused noise, in the rounded undulation, can one be put forward and the other exteriorised? Music must seek this and is already finding it.

Does not one perceive in the New Music that description and the melody of the past are already loosing their old supremacy? Has there not appeared in Music " another colour "—a colour less natural—another rhythm, more abstract? Does there not exist the beginning of a neutralising opposition (for example, in some essays in " style ", by the Dutch composer Van Domselaer) ?

This will not prevent the old mentality from yet for a long time putting obstacles in the way of the new spirit, above all, in music, for it lends itself admirably to tragic expression. But life continues ; ordinary life, by its real necessities, will influence art, which on that account will evolve the more swiftly. Art, alas !—for the weak—is the ideal domain wherein to sleep

CATALOGUE

no. 1. **PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN** *c. 1898*
watercolour 89 × 50 cm.
signed bottom left: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum

no. 2 **SLIPWAY** *c. 1900*
board 36.5 × 46 cm.
signed bottom left: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum

no. 3 **THE RIVER GEIN: TREES AT THE WATER'S EDGE** *c. 1902*
panel 31 × 35 cm.
Collection: Mme. T. Bruin-Reitsma, Heemstede

no. 4 **THE RIVER GEIN: TREES AT MOON-RISE** *1902* — never!
canvas 79 × 92.5 cm.
Private Collection: Holland

no. 5 **THE RIVER GEIN: WILLOWS** *1903*
watercolour 48 × 62 cm.
signed bottom left: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mme. T. Bruin-Reitsma, Heemstede

no. 6 **FARMHOUSE AT NISTELRODE**
c. 1904
watercolour 44.5 × 63 cm.
Private Collection: Holland

no. 7 **FARMSTEAD** *c. 1904-5*
watercolour 51 × 65.5 cm.
signed bottom left: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum

no. 8 **PORTRAIT OF A GIRL** *c. 1904*
canvas 53 × 44 cm.
signed bottom left: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum

frontispiece

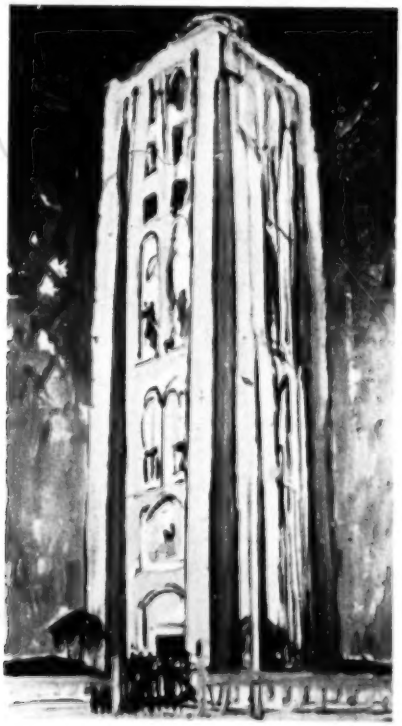
no. 9 **CHRYSANTHEMUM** *1906*
canvas 67.5 × 42 cm.
signed bottom left: P.M. 1906
Collection: Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart

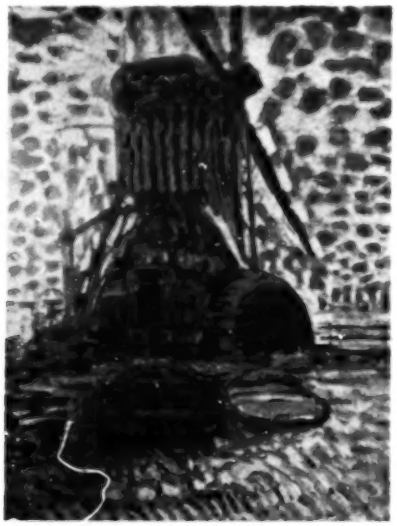
no. 10 EVENING LANDSCAPE *c. 1907*
canvas 64 × 93 cm.
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

no. 11 WINTER LANDSCAPE *c. 1907*
canvas 36 × 61.5 cm.
signed bottom right: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: P. R. Nieboer van Haasen, The Hague: on loan to the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

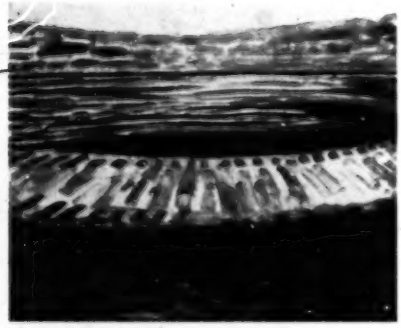
no. 12 WOOD AT OELE *1908*
canvas 128 × 158 cm.
signed bottom right: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

no. 13 WESTKAPELLE LIGHTHOUSE
c. 1909-10
canvas 135 × 75 cm.
signed bottom left: P. Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague





no. 14 WINDMILL IN SUNLIGHT *1908*
canvas 114 × 87 cm.
signed bottom right: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague

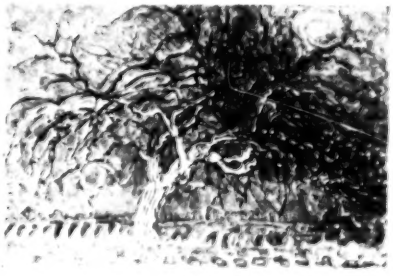


no. 15 SEA AT SUNSET *1909*
board 62.5 × 74.5 cm.
signed bottom left: Piet Mondriaan
Private Collection: Holland

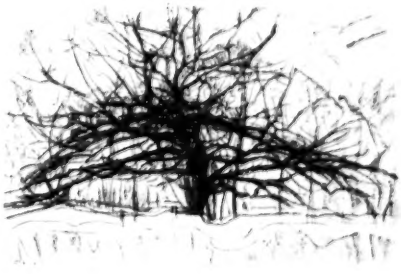
no. 16 TREE *1909-10*
chalk drawing 32 × 49 cm.
Collection: Mr. M. J. Heybroek, Hilversum

no. 17 TREE *1909-10*
drawing 31 × 44 cm.
signed bottom right: P. Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague

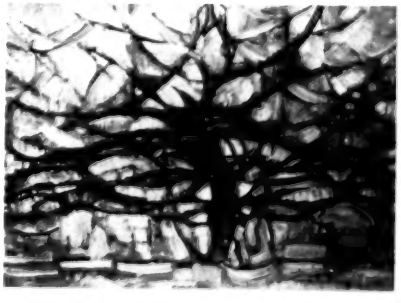
no. 18 THE BLUE TREE *1909-10*
watercolour on board 75.5 × 99.5 cm.
signed bottom right: Piet Mondriaan
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



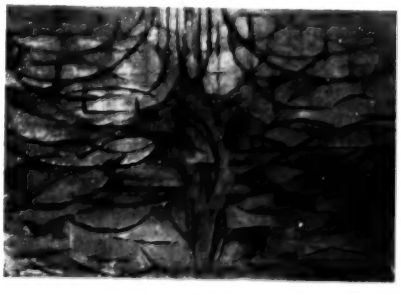
no. 19 THE RED TREE *1910*
canvas 70 × 99 cm.
signed bottom left: P.M.
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



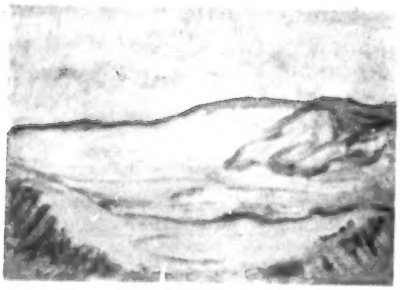
no. 20 TREE *1910-11*
chalk drawing 56.5 × 84.5 cm.
signed bottom left: P. Mondrian
Collection: Mme. M. Elout-Drabbe, Domburg



no. 21 THE GREY TREE *1910-11*
canvas 78.5 × 107.5 cm.
signed bottom left: P. Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague

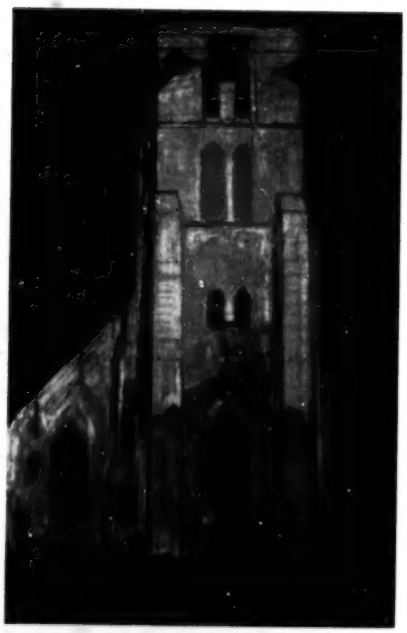


no. 22 APPLE TREE IN BLOSSOM *c. 1911*
canvas 78 × 106 cm.
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



no. 23 DUNES *c. 1909*
board 33 × 46 cm.
signed bottom right: P. Mondriaan
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum

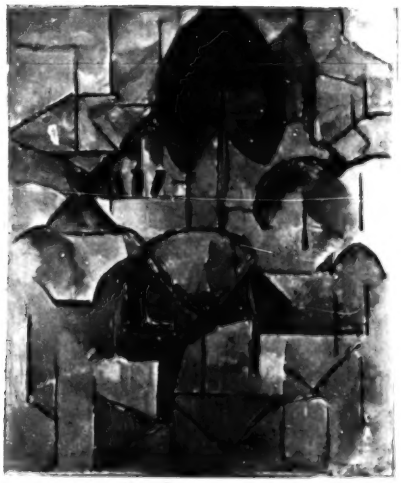
no. 24 DUNES *c. 1910*
canvas 65.5 × 96 cm.
Collection: Mme. T. Bruin-Reitsma, Heemstede



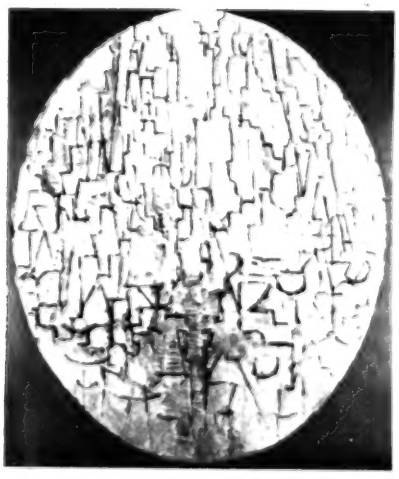
no. 25 CHURCH TOWER: DOMBURG *1910*
canvas 114 × 75 cm.
signed bottom left: P.M.
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum; on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague

no. 26 LANDSCAPE *c. 1911*
canvas 63 × 78 cm.
signed bottom right: Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum; on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague

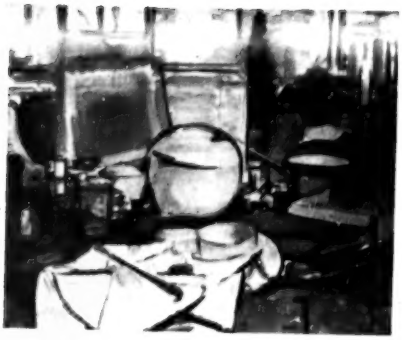
no. 27 FIGURE STUDY *c. 1911*
canvas 115 · 88 cm.
signed bottom left: Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum; on loan to the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



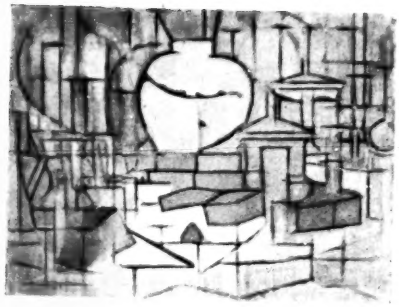
no. 28 LANDSCAPE WITH TREES *c. 1911*
canvas 120 · 100 cm.
signed bottom right: Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum; on loan to the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



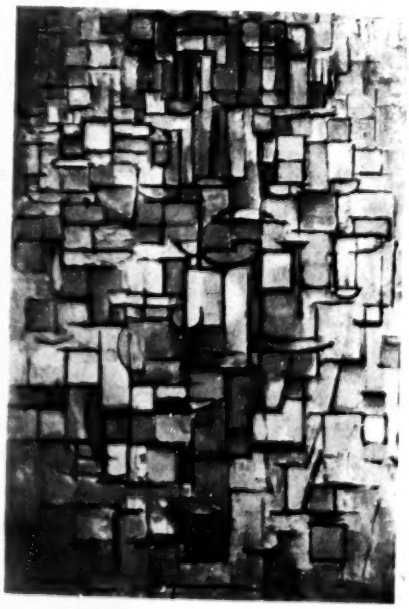
no. 29 COMPOSITION IN OVAL: TREES
c. 1911-12
canvas 93 · 78 cm.
signed bottom right: Mondrian
Collection: Dr. H. P. Bremmer, The Hague



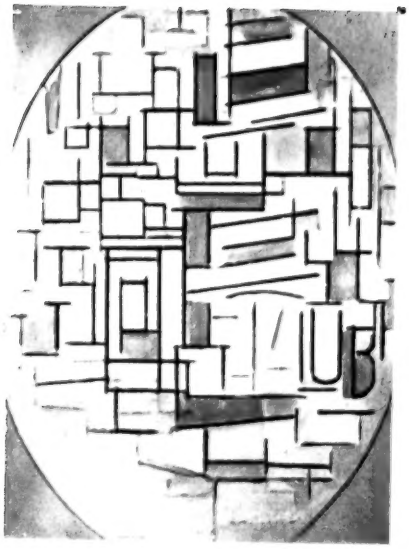
no. 30 STILL LIFE WITH GINGERPOT I
1911 canvas 65.5 · 75 cm.
signed bottom right: P. Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague



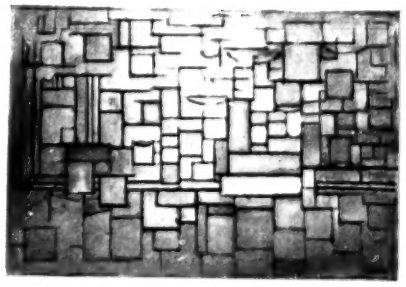
no. 31 STILL LIFE WITH GINGERPOT II
1911
canvas 91.5 · 120 cm.
signed bottom right: Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague



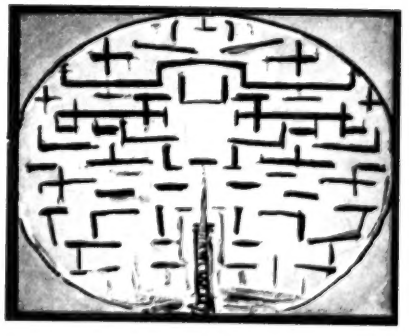
no. 32 COMPOSITION: TABLEAU I *c. 1912*
canvas 96 × 64 cm.
signed bottom right: Mondrian
Collection: Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo



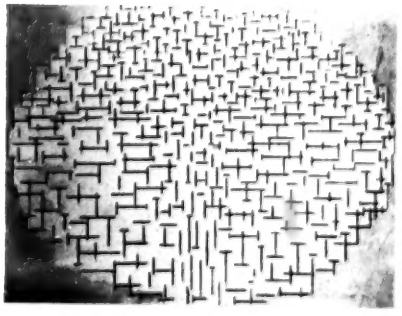
no. 33 COMPOSITION IN OVAL *1914*
canvas 113 · 84.5 cm.
signed bottom left: Mondrian
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum; on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague



no. 34 FACADE IN TAN AND GREY *1913*
canvas 63.5 · 91 cm.
signed bottom right: Mondrian
Collection: Mr. Edgar Kaufman, Jnr., New York

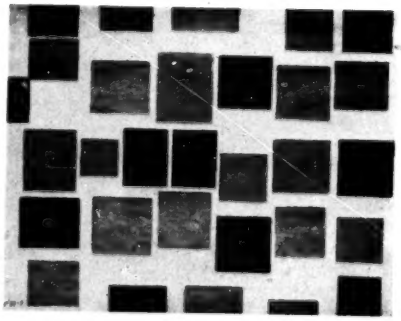


no. 35 PIER AND OCEAN *1914*
pen, ink and gouache 50 × 63 cm.
signed bottom right: P.M. 14
Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut

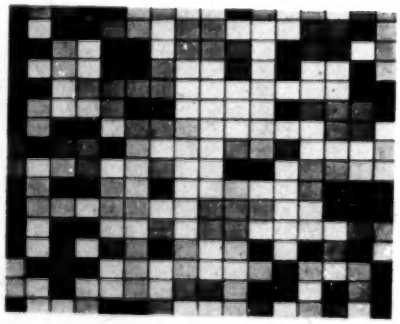


not exhibited
no. 36 COMPOSITION IN LINE AND COLOUR: PLUS-MINUS *1915*
canvas 44 × 50 cm.
signed bottom left: P. Mondriaan '15
Collection: Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller

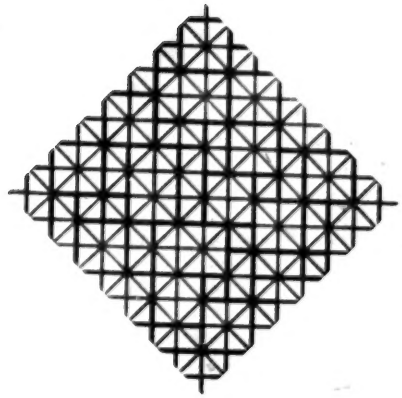
no. 37 COMPOSITION IN BLUE, B *1917*
canvas 50×45 cm.
signed bottom left: PM '17
Collection: Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo



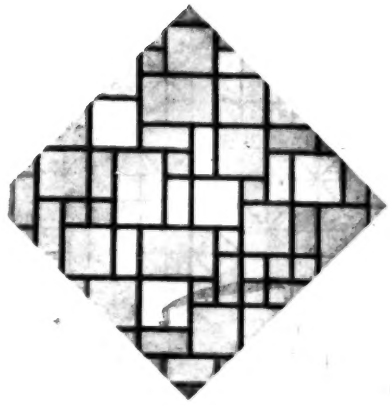
no. 38 COMPOSITION No. 3 WITH COLOURED PLANES *1917*
canvas 48×61 cm.
signed bottom left: PM 17
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



no. 39 COMPOSITION: DRAUGHTBOARD, LIGHT COLOURS *1919*
canvas 86×106 cm.
signed bottom left: PM '19
Collection: Mr. S. B. Slijper, Blaricum: on loan to the Gemeente-museum, The Hague

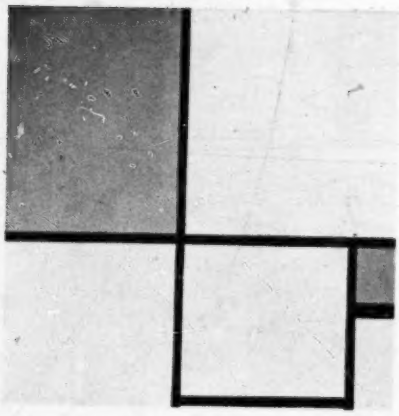


no. 40 LOZENGE WITH GREY LINES *1918*
canvas: diagonal 121 cm.
signed: PM 18
Private Collection, Holland

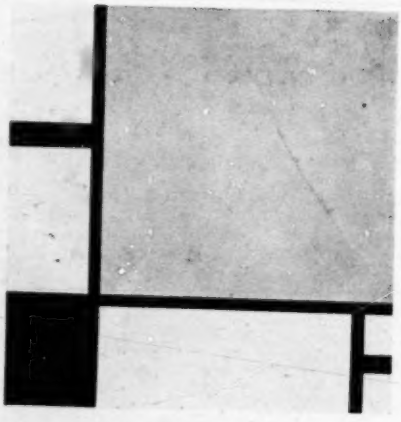


no. 41 COMPOSITION: LIGHT COLOURED PLANES WITH GREY LINES *1919*
canvas: diagonal 84 cm.
signed at base: PM '19
Collection: Rijskmuseum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo

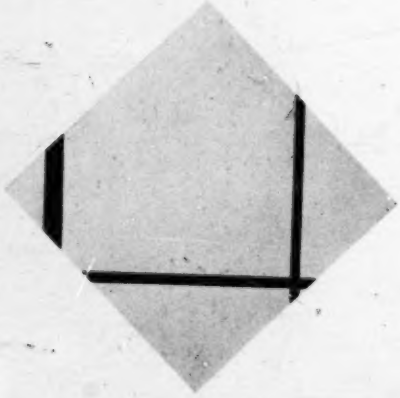
no. 42 COMPOSITION IN RED, YELLOW AND BLUE *1921*
canvas 80 × 50 cm.
signed bottom left: PM 21
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



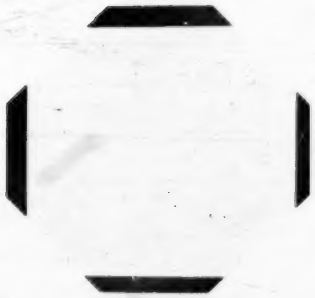
no. 43 **COMPOSITION IN YELLOW AND BLUE** *1929*
canvas 50 × 50 cm.
signed bottom right: PM 29
Collection: Boymans Museum, Rotterdam



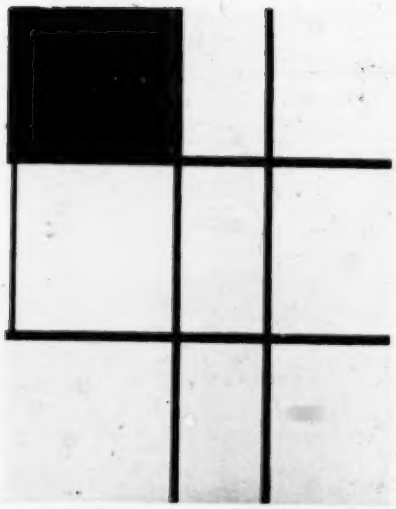
not exhibited
COMPOSITION IN RED, YELLOW AND BLUE *1930*
canvas 48 × 48 cm.
signed bottom left: P.M. '30
Collection: Mr. Alfred Roth, Zurich



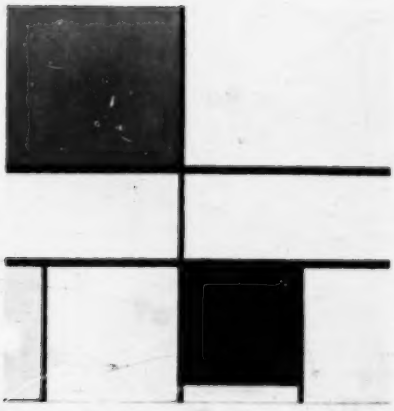
no. 44 **FOX TROT A** *1930*
canvas: diagonal 110 cm.
signed bottom left: PM 30
Collection: Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut



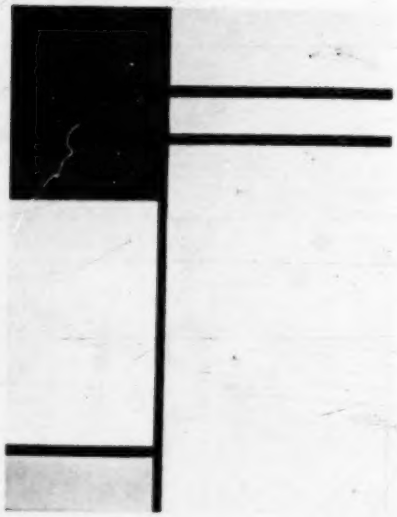
no. 45 **COMPOSITION WITH YELLOW LINES** *1933*
canvas: diagonal 133 cm.
signed bottom right: PM 33
Collection: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



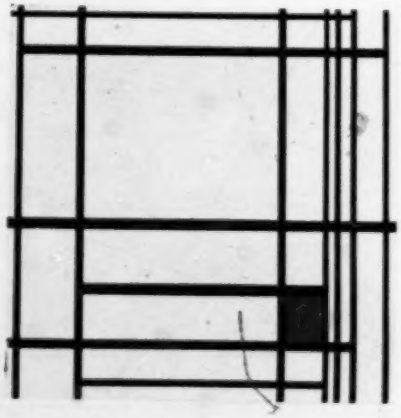
no. 46 **COMPOSITION B, WITH RED** *1935*
canvas 91.5×71.5 cm.
signed bottom right: PM 35
Collection: Miss Helen Sutherland



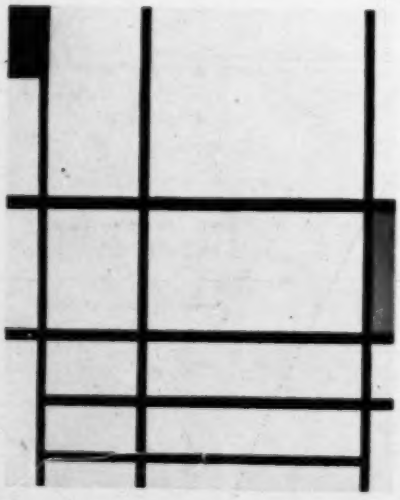
no. 47 **COMPOSITION WITH RED, BLUE AND YELLOW** *1935*
canvas 55×55 cm.
signed bottom: PM 35
Collection: Mrs. Basil Gray



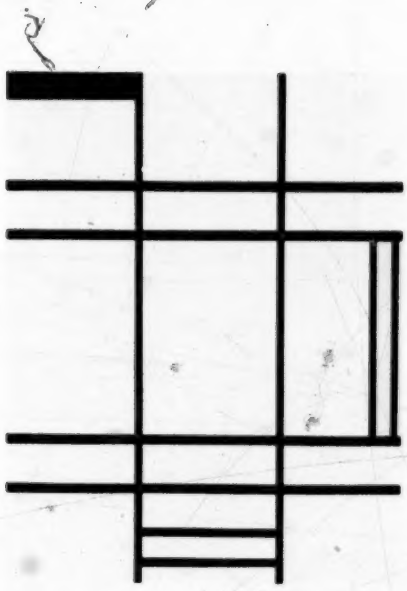
no. 48 COMPOSITION IN RED, WHITE AND GREY *1936*
canvas 63 × 40.5 cm.
signed bottom right: PM 36
Collection: J. L. and Sadie Martin



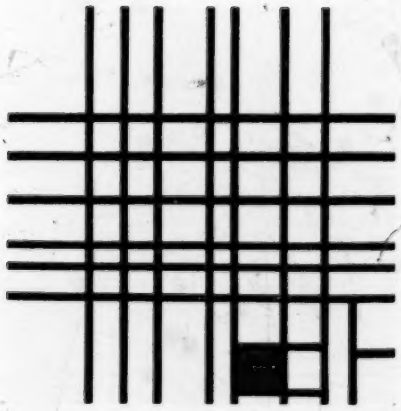
no. 49 COMPOSITION WITH BLUE *1937*
canvas 79 × 80 cm.
signed at base: PM 37
Collection: Mr. Marcus Brumwell, London



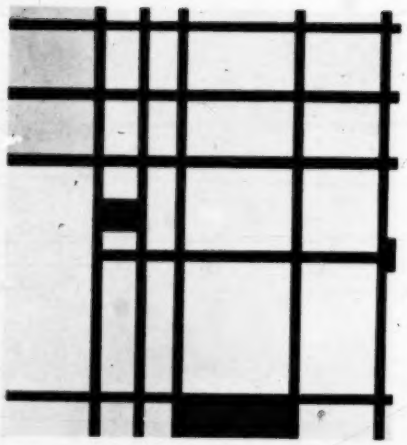
no. 50 COMPOSITION No. 2 IN RED, BLUE AND WHITE *1937*
canvas 75 × 60.5 cm.
initialled P.M. at base
signed: Piet Mondrian on stretcher back
Collection: Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth



no. 51 COMPOSITION WITH WHITE, YELLOW AND RED *1938*
canvas 79.5 × 62 cm.
signed at base: PM 38
By courtesy of the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York



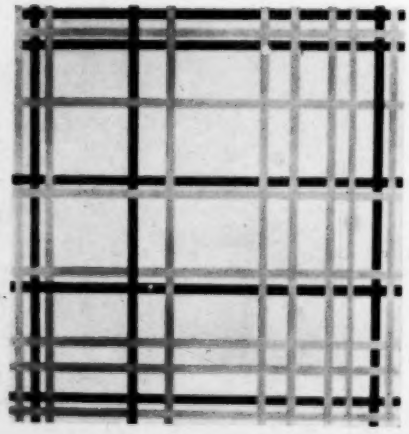
no. 52 COMPOSITION WITH BLUE SQUARE *1936-42*
canvas 61 × 61 cm.
signed at base: PM 36/42
by courtesy of the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York



no. 53 COMPOSITION IN RED, YELLOW AND BLUE *1936-43*
canvas 60 × 55 cm.
signed at base: PM 36-43
by courtesy of the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

COVER PLATE

no. 54 COMPOSITION IN RED, YELLOW AND BLUE *1939-42*
canvas 72 × 69 cm.
signed bottom left and right: PM 39-42
Collection: Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart



no. 55 NEW YORK CITY *1942*
canvas 120 × 114 cm.
signed bottom left and right: PM 42
by courtesy of the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

on the bosom of traditional beauty lulled by the round and soothing rhythm of the agreeable and the pretty.

Life, in its multiplicity, even apart from art, will wear away the old music and sustain the new. In our day, there appears, in the midst of traditional music and perhaps rather brutally, the jazz-band, which dares abrupt destruction of melody and, by its sharp, strange noises, opposes the rotundity of sound, and, while it has not yet abandoned the old instruments, yet opposes them with others which are more modern.

Traditionalists may complain as much as they like, the new spirit is on the march and nothing can stay it.

If financial power were not the appanage of the past, the new spirit (become conscious in certain individuals because its environment is too severely represssive) would manifest itself to more perfection and in a wider circle. But, actually, the new spirit has nothing to gain from a total overturning of society ; while men are not yet " new ", there is no place for " newness ".

Without belittling, for Music, the effort towards " new conditions ", it is very necessary to recognise that if, at present, there are many innovations, the great renewal has not yet come. This is equally true for the Painting that preceded Neo-Plasticism. One will never adequately appreciate the work and the impulse of the Cubists, Futurists and Dadaists ; but as long as they continue to employ morphoplasticity, even in refining and stylising it, they will neither attain to the new mentality nor entirely do away with the old.

It is evident that the " Neo-Plasticisms " desire " the new " in all the arts and attempt its consecration with all their power. But without the financial means, it is impossible to realise it experimentally. If social and material circumstances were favourable, this would not be so, since, ultimately, all the arts are but one. The " Maecenas period " has ended, and the Neo-Plastician cannot imitate a da Vinci. All that he can do (and that, even, is not permitted to him) is to make use of logic in putting forward his ideas on the other arts.

As we have said above, the plastic means of Music must be interiorised. The musical scale with its seven tones was based on morphoplasticity. In the same way as the seven colours of the prism unite in the new appearance, the seven tones of Music melt into apparent unity. In their natural order, the tones, like the colours, express natural harmony.

Modern Music has tried to destroy this by proportional plasticity, but, not daring to tamper with the natural scale or with out-of-date instruments, natural plasticity continues in spite of all.

The harmony of the past represents natural harmony. It is expressed in the seven-toned harmony, but not in the equivalence of nature and mind. For " the new man " it exists in this alone. The new harmony is a double harmony ; that is to say, the duality of mental harmony and natural harmony. It is revealed as interior harmony and exterior harmony, both interiorised in exteriority. For only that which is most exterior can express itself plastically by natural

harmony ; that which is most interior does not plastically express itself. The new harmony, therefore, can never express itself as nature ; it is the harmony of art.

This harmony of art is so totally different from natural harmony that we prefer (in the New Plasticity to use the term " equivalent relationship " rather than " harmony ". Yet we must not attach to the word " equivalent " the sense of " symmetrical ". Equivalent relationship expresses itself plastically by contraries—by neutralising oppositions, which, in the old sense, are not harmonious.

The three fundamental colours, red, yellow and blue, remain prismatic colours despite the distance which separates them in the prism, and despite the Neo-Plasticism which does not express them in their appearance in the spectrum. If we express these colours according to their scientific or natural laws, we should only make natural harmony express itself in another manner. Since the New Plasticity wishes to abolish the natural, it is logical in placing the three colours in Painting, and the corresponding tones in Music, in other relationships of dimension, power, colour or tonality, while preserving æsthetic balance. Thus one may say of the New Plasticity that it is not harmonious (in the old acceptance of the term), that it does not express unity precisely where it indeed expresses it in greater perfection, for does it not suppress the apparent unity of the natural?

It is this " disharmony " (in the old conception) which will be everywhere challenged and attacked in the new art as long as the new harmony is misunderstood. In our period, characterised by the effort towards unity in all domains, it is of much importance to distinguish between real and apparent unity, the universal and the individual. Our " conscious self " seeks unity, but in the wrong direction. Our " unconscious self ", being itself unity, draws it naturally to clarity ; it is at first veiled and then is clarified (for when the unconscious becomes conscious, see above). Thus we see the successive destruction of apparent unities (and so of natural harmonies), until the true unity and real harmony are revealed.

Individual harmony employs only natural expression, even when it desires to proceed logically, if it " reasons ". But the unconscious in us warns us that in art we must follow a particular direction. And if we follow it, it is not a sign of an unconscious act. On the contrary, it shows in our ordinary consciousness a greater awareness of our unconsciousness ; the unconscious supplants the individual consciousness to the best of its ability. In art, one cannot ignore the human being himself, and it is his relation to " that which is ", and not " that which is " alone, which creates art.

We have a tendency in art to apply the old, that is to say, the natural, conception of harmony. And it is this conception which makes us hold to the natural sequence and relation of the seven colours of the spectrum and the seven corresponding tones. But in the past, art already showed the way. It broke the natural sequence of colours and tones. And in the old conception, Music also seeks, by various means, another harmony (without always reaching clarity).

If one attempted, as in Gregorian music, to pierce to the depths of the dominating natural by simplifying and purifying, one would only reach another form of sentimental expression. Modern music has tried to free itself from the old form ; but it " ignores " the old, rather than it constructs a new appearance. This is because it always preserves the old foundations in its construction. Each movement in art which is not represented by clarity of spirit goes astray.

Yet by seeking, one arrives at truth in the end, though not before the time for it has come. Superficially, one thinks it is found by seeking, but actually it will be found only when the new spirit is mature.

In listening to modern musicians who have not thoroughly broken with sentimental instrumentalism, one has the impression that the time is not yet ripe for the new Music. Nevertheless, the new is to be seen appearing through the old, and there are some with whom a need for it may be discerned. That fact should suffice.

The old tonic scale and the habitual instruments must alike be banished from Music if the new spirit desires plastic expression. Besides a new kind of composition, other plastic means must be evolved in order that Music, like the so-called plastic arts, may acquire a new technique.

Like colour in painting, sound in music must be determinate, by composition and plastic means, if it is to function as an exact plastic means for the universal. Composition will reach this by a new harmony, dual in its neutralising opposition. The plastic means to this will be by sounds which are fixed, plane, and pure. Each fundamental tone must be clearly limited, as much by its opposite as its own nature, for each instrument by its nature and construction possesses a timbre which, much more than vibrations, produces more or less the " naturalness " of the sound.

Stringed and wind instruments, brasses, etc., must be replaced by a battery of hard objects. The construction and material of these new instruments will be of the greatest importance. Thus the " hollow " and the " bulging " will be replaced by the " flat " and the " plane ", because timbre depends on the form and the material employed. This will need much research. And in regard to the means of producing sound, it will be preferable to use electricity, magnetism, mechanics, for they can but exclude the interference of the individual.

The work of the new Art must be exclusively a clear plastic exteriorisation, balanced and æsthetic in its relationships of sound.

The Theatre and the Opera keep company as Dramatic Art. Yet, as in Gesture and Miming, the plastic exteriorisation of the indivudal continues to dominate, the primitive conception of the theatre will gradually be lost in the new art. Whatever the power of profundity in gesture and mimicry, it is no less true that movement describes " form " and does not express plastically and purely the individual-and-universal-in-balanced-relationship. Dramatic Art being the plastic expression of an act or a state of mind by aid of the human figure, it is a reality in which the plastic expression of abstract reality has become impossible.

For the new man, the theatre is superfluous when it is not embarrassing. The new spirit, when it reaches its culminating point, will interiorise gesture and mimicry ; it will realise in everyday life what the theatre showed and described by exteriority. Yet while this point is still unattained, the theatre will keep its reason for existence ; it will answer a need by continuing tragedy, although this may have lost its power to dominate. But in its new appearance it must be transformed. The Futurists felt and expressed this strongly in their manifesto. A logical transformation is, however, impossible until the arts which collaborate in it are resuscitated in the New Plasticity.

The theatre still keeps its reason for existence by providing for many spectators a union of all the arts, which, in their simultaneous action, give the theatre the power of moving us more strongly and directly than would each one by itself. It can arouse emotion by beauty or by the plastic exteriorisation of the tragic. This is what characterises the theatre and the opera of yesterday and today.

If, even, we also count the decoration, the theatre is a triple, and the opera a quadruple, plastic expression of the tragic.

The New Plasticity desires no more tragic plasticity, but the plastic expression of the beautiful—the beautiful in so far as it is truth. It desires to exteriorise abstract beauty. It will be able to create an ambiance of abstract beauty by the New Chromoplasticity in architecture, which will replace the old-style decoration. The New Music will act in like manner for the opera.

The new Verbal Art will most likely precede " beauty-in-so-far-as-truth " by contrariety of verbal plasticity. One will even be able to " say " the word without the appearance of the human figure.

Thus the theatre will become the great instigator of the " new " by representations in the " New Plasticity ". But it will refuse to attempt these for a long time yet, owing to the great material difficulties involved ; for as all must be presented under an entirely new aspect, it would demand a formidable preparation. So the theatre will await the transformation of the other arts ; it will then follow them naturally.

Balanced relationship, of which the old theatre was the negative plastic exteriorisation, " appears in the new ". The effort at harmony is visible in the tragedy of the past, but is expressed plastically by disharmony or ficticious harmony.

In the new art, the Dance (ballet, etc.) follows the same direction as Gesture and Miming. It passes from art into life. As a stage-performance, the dance will be given up, since one will realise its rhythm for oneself. The new dances outside art—the tango, fox-trot, etc.—already slightly reveal the idea of balance through opposition in duality. Thus it will become possible to experience balanced reality physically.

The Decorative Arts disappear in Neo-Plasticism, as do the Applied Arts. Furniture,

Pottery, etc., will come into being by the simultaneous action of the new Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, and will automatically be ruled by the laws of the New Plasticity.

Thus, through the new spirit, Man himself will create a new beauty, whereas in the past he only sang or plastically expressed the beauty of nature. This new beauty has become indispensable to the new man, for it expresses his own image in equivalent opposition. The New Art Is Born.

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translated from the French of Piet Mondriaan by T. W. Earp: May 1955

MONDRIAAN: PURE PLASTIC ART

New York, March 1942

Unconsciously, every real artist has always been moved by the beauty of line and colour and their mutual relationship and not by what they represent. He has always tried by these means alone to express all energy and all vital richness. On the other hand, he has followed the forms of the objects consciously. And consciously he has always tried to express objects and feelings by form and technique.

Unconsciously, however, he has made planes and increased the tension of line and purified colour. Thus he has gradually led the culture of painting throughout the ages to the *complete elimination of limiting form and of special representation.*

In our time art has become liberated of everything which prevents it from becoming really plastic. This liberation is of the greatest importance to it, because its aim is to rise above individual expression and, as far as possible, to unveil the universal aspect of life.

Every artistic utterance has its own laws which correspond to the principal law of art and life: that of equilibrium. On these laws depends to what degree equilibrium can be realised and to what extent disequilibrium can be eliminated. This becomes clear if we compare the various forms of expression of earlier and present-day art. Both have always tried in all ways to express equilibrium and have striven to create a universal method of expression. The desires for equilibrium and for disequilibrium are constantly opposed to one another. Thus only culture moving in the direction of equilibrium finds expression. Culture advances to the same extent as we experience the oppression of tragedy ; an oppression caused by the inequality of these two polarities in human life.

In nature, a total liberation from tragic feeling is not possible. In life, in which physical form is not only necessary but of the greatest importance, equilibrium will always be very relative.

But the man who develops in the direction of the equilibrium of his duality, *will always to an ever increasing degree create equal relationships, and therefore equilibrium, both in life and in art.*

Social and economic life today already shows his striving for an exact equilibrium. Material life will not forever be menaced and doomed to tragedy. Nor will our spiritual life be continually suppressed by the domination of material existence. Science becomes evermore successful in maintaining our physical well-being. More raw materials continually satisfy human demands by the improvement of technique.

Human life, although dependent on the physical and the material, *will not always remain dominated by the unrestrained natural.* Equilibrium will be approached in every purely plastic

creation by equality of the relationships. Man can create a new reality within the limits of plastic means. Only after a culture of long duration is there seen in the plastic expression of limiting form another plastic expression which, although closely connected with the first, is at the same time opposed thereto. After century-long culture of limiting form, art has now succeeded in accomplishing this plastic expression : *it is the clear realisation of liberated and universal rhythm, which was distorted and concealed in the individual rhythm of the limiting form.* The way to the creation of a new plastic form of expression : that of liberated rhythm, both in literature and in sculpture and painting, was prepared by various artistic movements, but particularly by Cubism, Futurism, and Dadaism. Art calls for release from the limiting form because the latter stands in the way of the expression of liberated rhythm. Without ignoring our individual nature even slightly, and without the notion of eliminating the " human note " in the work of art, pure plastic art is the combination of the individual with the universal, because a liberated rhythm is composed of these two aspects of life in equal proportion. Hence art must attain an exact equilibrium by creating purely plastic means occurring in absolute opposition. Thus the two opposite quantities (vertical and horizontal) are equivalent, i.e. of equal value : a primary necessity for equilibrium. By means of abstraction, art has intensified colour and form and brought the curved line to its maximum tension : the straight line. Using rectangular contrast, the constant relationship achieves the universal-individual duality : unity. In the purely plastic composition the constant relationship expresses invariability. It is the universal expression in contrast to *dimensional proportion*, which is the variable and individual expression in the purely plastic work of art. This constant relationship is therefore living and concrete to a mentality striving for universal-individual equilibrium. The differing proportions of the opposite duality of the straight line achieve a rhythm which is constantly varied by the proportions of the dimensions and which is at the same time constant as a result of the constant relationship. Wherever the limiting form is avoided, *this liberated rhythm is the plastic expression which is concealed in reality and which is created by conscious feeling for universal equilibrium. It is the expression of tangible reality on a higher plane: the expression of real reality and of real " human life " —constant and yet always varying.*

Limiting form always tells us something ; it is *descriptive*. As long as emphasis is placed thereon in the work of art, the individual expression dominates. To this it might be objected that when the universal expression is strong enough in the work of art, the descriptive element, the limiting form does not disturb so very greatly. Many works of art of this period and in the past do in fact appear to plead for this conclusion. But why use form when the latter weakens the purely plastic expression ? Everything depends, however, on the period in which we live. The limiting form was logical in plastic art earlier. Thus it does not disturb us in the masterpieces of art ; on the contrary, it supports them. In our time, every manifestation both in life and in the plastic expression, shows a desire for liberation. Limiting form then becomes an obstruction. The fact that tangible reality is expressed by limiting form and also

by the influence of tradition encourage the use of limiting forms in art. But there is, above all, another cause : the unconscious love of tragic, unbalanced feelings.

Our material environment (architecture, objects of utility, and so on), which is more easily liberated from tragic forms of expression, sometimes demands a more complicated plastic expression than the work of art. Although it is qualified by aesthetic concepts, the demands of use and necessity are the prime factors. A tendency to eliminate aesthetic feelings is today prevalent. These feelings are, nevertheless, essential to every realisation for the satisfaction of our normal demands. New aesthetics for our material environment, which exerts such a deep influence on our mentality, can be constructed on the principles of pure plasticism. In the future, the realisation in tangible reality of pure plasticism will replace the work of art. But to achieve this, it will be necessary for us to direct ourselves towards a universal conception of life and to release ourselves from the pressure of nature. Then we shall no longer need paintings and sculptures, because we shall live in the midst of realised art.

If we truly conceive human life as a constant joy in the discovery and creation of concrete equilibrium, then this equilibrium becomes the most essential element of life to us. And all abstract forms of expression of life, such as science and philosophy, and similarly all abstract creations of an artistic nature, may be regarded as equally as many means to achieve equilibrium.

Art is only a substitute for the period during which there is a deficiency of beauty in life. Art will disappear as life more closely approaches equilibrium. At the present time art is still of the greatest importance because the laws of equilibrium are demonstrated by it in a direct manner independent of individual conceptions.

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from an English translation of an article in French

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MONDRIAAN IN HIS STUDIO IN NEW YORK, 1943 AGED SEVENTY-ONE

Photograph: Fritz Glarner, N.Y.